



Senate Information Office

201 Paul D. Coverdell Legislative Office Building
18 Capitol Square
Atlanta, Georgia 30334
404.656.0028 or outside the Atlanta area 800.282.5803

PRESS RELEASE

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For Information Contact:
Merri M. Brantley, Director
merri.brantley@senate.ga.gov
404.463.6833/770.361.4364

Tough illegal immigration bill passes Senate

ATLANTA - Following a long debate, the Senate passed the toughest, most comprehensive illegal immigration law in the nation, the *Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act*. Senate Bill 529, authored by Sen. Chip Rogers (R-Woodstock), passed the Senate in a bi-partisan manner 40-13, in a step to bring the state into compliance with federal law.

“This legislation proves that Georgia is serious about addressing the issue of illegal immigration,” Sen. Rogers said, following the vote. “Legal immigration is the foundation of America – but it is important that anyone coming to this country do so through the proper channels. There are millions of people all over the world standing in line waiting to come to this nation. We must make sure those honest people are rewarded first.”

Senate Bill 529, which Rogers has been working on for more than a year, addresses four major components: public safety, public contracts, private employers and public benefits. Specifically, the legislation outlaws human smuggling, which has become a problem in Georgia over the past decade, and requires those arrested on a criminal charge to prove that they are in the country legally.

The measure also cracks down on businesses which have hired illegal immigrants. Sen. Rogers says he is concerned that employers are receiving tax breaks when they are knowingly hiring illegal labor.

“It isn’t right,” Sen. Rogers said. “Taxpayer dollars should not be used to pay contractors who knowingly violate federal immigration hiring laws. Tax benefits should be reserved for those who legally qualify – surely, no one wants our limited benefits to go to those not legally qualified to receive them.”

Since the early 1990s, Georgia has seen an influx of illegal immigrants moving to Georgia to take jobs in the agriculture arena, construction business and in the carpet mills of north Georgia. Sen. Rogers says that many of these laborers are paid in cash and don't pay taxes. He says that both the businesses and the laborers are cheating the system.

"Every employer and employee should follow the same rules. No business should be rewarded in the marketplace for breaking the law and likewise, no business should be punished in the marketplace for following the law."

Senate Bill 529 now moves to the House of Representatives for approval.

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Sen. Chip Rogers serves as Chairman of the Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee. He represents the 21st Senate District which includes portions of Cherokee and Cobb counties. He can be reached at his office at 404.463.1378 or by email at chip.rogers@senate.ga.gov.